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ABSTRACT

It is not enough for students of English as a second language enrolled in English-language elementary school programs to speak English fluently at the conversational level; they must be provided with language and an environment for continuing cognitive development through the application of high-level thinking skills, often without the benefit of good reading skills. The traditional structure of a whole classroom presentation will not meet the needs of ESL students, but must be adjusted to allow for cooperative learning strategies among students. Beginning language learners can be paired with native speakers and may be allowed to substitute nonverbal for verbal responses. Classroom peers can help intermediate language learners by simplifying or clarifying information presented to them. Vocabulary activities requiring active listening and using repetition of new input are most effective. Study skills, crucial to the second language learner who must learn content through a language-dependent medium such as textbooks, can be taught by providing students with the structure needed to organize new information in a learnable framework, such as previewing content and providing outlines containing empty cells for completion during a class presentation. Textbooks and related exercises can be adapted and explicated in a variety of ways to make them more accessible to the language learner. (MSE)

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CONTENT AREA INSTRUCTION FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ESL STUDENT

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Elementary school children learning English as a second language without the benefit of bilingual programs have great difficulty learning science and social studies concepts taught in a language which these children understand and speak imperfectly. These difficulties intensify by grades four and five when vocabulary level increases and the use of textbooks is required for most classroom instruction.

Classroom teachers, untrained in ESL teaching techniques, may feel unable to deal with the demands of a class containing not only mixed levels of English-speaking students but also a number of bilingual children whose aural-oral and reading skills in English require specialized teaching techniques.

The elementary school ESL teacher, acting as a consultant to the classroom teacher, needs specific instructions to offer to teachers for classroom restructuring, and also teaching techniques that will help these teachers include ESL students in the classroom learning environment during the child's transition to English dominance.

This discussion will include perspectives on the nature of the problem and specific teaching and grouping techniques for fourth and fifth grade large group classroom instruction of multi-level and multi-lingual students.

The problems inherent in the teaching-learning of content concepts to second language learners in English begin in the distinction Jim Cummins (1981) makes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Language (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS is the language of face-to-face communication. It is highly dependent on the context of the environment and gestural cues. BICS allows students to play, make friends, express needs, complain, and report. BICS users develop strategies that make them "appear" to be good language users: formulaic expressions/routines, avoidance strategies in speaking, guessing from context when listening or ignoring communication that is not understood unless the listener is required to understand.

In my experience, in a predominantly English-speaking school and community, most of my students become very good BICS users within two years. The

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teaching staff in the school view these children as "fluent" speakers of English. For this reason, they find it difficult to understand how the poor school performance of these students is related to language. Instead, they look for reasons relating to low IQ and learning disabilities.

Cummins' (1981) concept of CALP, however, reminds us that school success is related to a student's ability to perform high level thinking skills in a second language, skills such as interpreting, classifying, analyzing, judging, making applications of knowledge, evaluating, and drawing inferences. These skills require specialized language and specialized tasks. The ability to perform these skills successfully requires continuing cognitive development. Increased cognitive development, in turn, better enables students to think critically. And so it is a continuous cycle of language aiding the development of cognitive growth which in turn aids language growth. Unlike BICS which requires two years to develop, Cummins believes that CALP requires five to seven years in most children. Furthermore, CALP develops mainly through school experiences. Nowhere else in the child's daily routine does anyone ask a child to compare, classify, or analyze material outside of his or her daily concrete life experiences. Unfortunately, the school experiences so essential to the development of CALP are often dependent upon reading in English—one of the last language skills mastered by ESL students.

Cummins' (1981) analysis indicates that it is not enough for elementary ESL teachers to enable children to speak English fluently at the conversation level. We must also provide children with the language and the environment whereby they can continue cognitive development through the application of high level thinking skills. In addition, we are challenged with the job of helping classroom teachers include ESL children in a meaningful way in classroom learning in spite of low-level reading skills.

How do we begin? We should first recognize that the traditional class structure of a whole class presentation (such as a lecture, film, or textbook reading) followed by individual written exercises will not meet the needs of the ESL students in the group. A change of classroom organization is necessary to allow for cooperative learning strategies among students. Research into the learning styles of language learning children indicates that these children learn a great deal from their peers. Therefore, teachers would do well to incorporate small group or paired learning experiences into some part of the child's day.

With beginning level language learners, it is helpful to choose an English-speaking child who is sociable and nurturing as half of the learning pair. It isn't necessary to pair the brightest student in the class with a second language learner. Select several children to spend fifteen minutes each day with the ESL student. Set a definite goal and a time limit, and assign activities to the group or dyad which require interaction for completion. Examples of interaction activities include the following tasks:

- complete one math ditto together
- make a map of the school/state/country
- watch a filmstrip together and write a list of five new vocabulary words, or write a two-sentence summary, or draw a picture with labels summarizing the film

Teachers may accept non-verbal responses from beginning students such as sketches, diagrams, charts, time lines, flow charts, and tables. These responses require critical thinking skills from students but eliminate the need of producing results through a language medium. For example, the fourth grade student who is unable to write a paragraph summary of Ben Franklin's life may be able to draw a series of pictures illustrating the major events.

With intermediate level ESL students, use classroom peers to help simplify and clarify the information provided by the text, filmstrip, TV program, or audiotape. This activity is useful to both students in that English-speaking children must synthesize the concepts they have received from the presentation in order to create a summary paragraph or statement in cooperation with the language learning child.

It is important to keep some cautions in mind before attempting to group students in this way however. The activity must be time limited and have a specific performance objective. Do not place an English-speaking child with a second language child as a "helping situation." Some children will condescend. And do not assign peer work as an extra assignment for the English-speaking child. These activities should be viewed as regular work—not an added burden. Use a variety of students for pairing and incorporate small group activities into the school day for variety instead of the usual dyad situation.

Vocabulary

The beginning stages of most social studies and science lessons deal with the explication of new vocabulary. It's crucial that second-language students have a great many experiences with new vocabulary in several modalities (listening, speaking, reading, writing) because only then will the meaning of the new words become clear. The vocabulary learned by most students in content area classes is learned at the receptive level. The words are understood by students when heard or read in the text but most likely will not become a part of the students' active vocabularies until they are much older. In order to develop receptive understanding of new vocabulary, it is most helpful to present vocabulary learning tasks or games in short increments repeated frequently throughout the duration of the learning unit. The key to these vocabulary activities is that they require active listening on the part of the student.

For all vocabulary instruction, it is necessary to teach the following skills: (1) visual recognition of the new word, (2) auditory recognition of the new word and, (3) association of meaning with the new word. These skills can be taught in a variety of ways and, in fact, variety seems to produce faster results in my students. Some techniques I have found useful include the following:

(1) Write a list of six to eight new words on the blackboard. Pronounce them and ask the class to repeat them.

(2) Ask the students to copy the list of words in list form. Tell students you are going to call out the list of words in mixed order. Students should place the numeral one next to the first word called out, the numeral two next to the second, and so on. Correct papers by writing the numerical order on the blackboard. Challenge students by increasing the length of the list or by calling out the words with increasing speed. Spend no more than ten minutes on this activity and go on to another phase of the lesson. The skills being taught through

this activity are auditory and visual recognition of the new words. Many children will find this task challenging and fun.

(3) Write a short list of new vocabulary items on the board. Explicate the words briefly but in a variety of ways. For example, draw pictures; use the word in a sentence; and provide a synonym. Next, ask students to write down the word you describe from the list. Encourage students to guess; provide ample clues; and correct the lists immediately by calling out the correct words. The skill taught here is the association of meaning to a new word.

(4) Ask students to create a bingo grid on a piece of paper by drawing nine boxes. Write the list of vocabulary words on the board and tell students to copy the nine words in any order on the grid—one word to a box. To play the game, the teacher calls out words which the children circle. The first student to circle three words in a row up, down, or diagonally calls out "Bingo."

(5) A similar game can be used to reinforce word meanings. For this game, call out the meaning of a word, not the word itself. Children again circle words but they cannot win "Bingo" if they mistakenly circle a word that the teacher has not defined.

(6) Write a list of words on the board and tell students you are going to call out a word's opposite. Another variation is to call out synonyms or to say a sentence with a blank which the child must supply by copying the correct word from the board. Sometimes I make up short dialogues where the target vocabulary item is omitted. Use as many variations as you can think of but keep the practice short. Repeat the practice several times a week and provide students with ample opportunity to see the new words, hear the new words, and write the new words.

I don't ask children to write sentences containing new vocabulary items. Writing is a productive skill that requires fairly complete understanding of the grammatical and semantic features of the new word. As such, writing a sentence is a testing technique not a teaching technique. After many sessions of teaching, children should be able to write sentences in appropriate contexts. A preliminary step to this end is to provide students with sentences containing blanks and a list of the new vocabulary from which to choose.

A vocabulary project is helpful to intermediate level students for learning the new vocabulary introduced in each science or social studies unit. For example, in a fourth grade unit on American Colonization, the project might include a list of words such as *economics*, *politics*, *religion*, *government*, *climate*, and *culture*. A fifth grade social studies unit on geographical terminology of the U.S. regions would include: *altitude*, *coast*, *island*, *continent*, *highland*, etc. Groups of words such as these can first be taught using the techniques mentioned above. These techniques will enable students to match up a word with a meaning from a restricted list. The vocabulary project will further enable students to solidify the meaning of the word and use it in relation to other words—a more difficult task.

For each unit or theme to be studied, present students with a list of related words. Regulate the number of words to the students' ability. Pass out an instruction sheet and individual task sheets for each word on the list. For each new word, students must:

- (1) Give a definition
- (2) State the grammatical category
- (3) Give a synonym from the thesaurus
- (4) Draw a picture or cut out a picture illustrating the word

- (5) Look up the word in the textbook index and use the page number to find a sentence from the book using the word, then copy it
- (6) Write an original sentence using the word
- (7) Write a paragraph using five words from the project list
- (8) Make an attractive cover with a title and compile the task sheets into a booklet
- (9) Make a Table of Contents page
- (10) Make an attractive poster for the classroom illustrating one of the words from the list.

Vocabulary projects are useful learning activities for all of the students in the classroom. They provide repetition, a variety of learning activities, and the use of various modalities. Teachers can assign these projects on an individual, small group, or dyad basis. Another alternative is to use vocabulary projects as small group activities in the beginning of the year and individual projects at the end of the year. The projects provide students with an opportunity for language interaction, the development of critical thinking skills, and the learning of critical study skills.

Study Skills

All students in the middle grades need to learn study skills but these skills are a crucial necessity to the second language learner who must learn content material which is transmitted through a language-dependent medium such as a lecture or a textbook. Learning study skills in grades four and five will help the student to continue to be able to learn in the higher grades where content is more difficult. Teachers can help second language learners acquire factual information in the classroom by providing students with the structure they need to organize the new information into a learnable framework.

One method that will accomplish this goal is to provide students with advance organizers prior to the presentation of the new material. One simple form of advance organization can be accomplished by writing *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* on the blackboard. The teacher then tells students what the subject of the lesson is, e.g., the Boston Tea Party, and writes this on the board under the *what* column. Through questioning, the teacher can attempt to evoke the information needed under all five columns. Those columns that remain empty provide a framework for new information to be learned. After the students have completed the assigned reading or watched a filmstrip, the entire grid can be completed. The advance questioning not only prepares students for what they must learn, but also gives second language students the opportunity to see and hear new terms prior to the actual reading.

A similar approach requires the teacher to preview all new factual content prior to the reading task. Tell students what they will be reading and write key words on the blackboard. This technique helps students to focus attention on the major ideas.

Another advance organization technique is to ask and write a question on the board prior to reading, e.g., "Where or when did the Boston Tea Party take place?" These questions act as a frame for summarizing statements after the listening or reading experience.

Notetaking skills should be taught to all students in the middle grades but they are especially helpful to second language students as another means of organizing, synthesizing, and memorizing new facts and difficult vocabulary. Teachers can begin to teach notetaking skills in grades four and five by providing students with specific performance objectives. In other words, students need to know prior to the listening or reading experience if they will be required to recall the main idea or a series of important facts. To do this, it is necessary to provide students with an outline containing empty cells which must be filled in as students listen to a lecture or read a textbook. Depending on the kind of information to be recalled, you may provide students with different types of perceptual frames, e.g., a flow chart, a diagram, a time line, a chart, a sketch, or a table.

An example of the use of these techniques can be demonstrated with a grade four unit on American Colonization. The teacher first provides students with a matrix containing the types of information needed to be learned in the unit. This matrix can be in a ditto format or the teacher can simply outline it on the blackboard as students copy it into their notebooks. At this stage, students have the opportunity to hear and see unknown words and expressions, such as *Massachusetts Bay*, *Boston*, *Reasons for Immigration*, etc. The teacher can use some of the vocabulary techniques discussed earlier to help establish visual-auditory perception of the new vocabulary as well as begin to associate meaning with the vocabulary.

The next step is for the teacher to preview the content to be learned that day, listing this information on the blackboard. The lesson may center, for example, on the reasons for immigration to the New England colonies. The teacher will tell students that there were basically three reasons: religious freedom, economic opportunity, and political liberty. If these terms are new to the class, a few minutes of explication will be necessary. If the dates for establishment of the colonies are also to be studied, tell students that all establishment dates will fall between 1620-1750 and write this information on the blackboard too. Questions asked at this stage will give further practice of the new vocabulary and will ensure that all students in the class are paying attention and actively involved. It is important to ask low level questions for English-speaking students in the class. An example of low level questions may be: "How many colonies will we learn about? What are they?"

Students will next read the textbook or listen to a lecture, or watch a film taking notes on the required information for filling in the empty cells of the matrix. The teacher should follow the presentation by questioning students on the information required and completing the pertinent cells on the blackboard matrix. The class can next be divided into small groups or dyads. Each group must write a summary paragraph about one colony containing facts from the matrix. These paragraphs can be read to the class by one member of the group or collected by the teacher.

What has been learned by using this approach? In addition to the social studies facts required by the state curriculum, students learn to attend to, organize, and synthesize information. These are skills necessary to a child's developing cognition. The approach enables second language learners to take part in cognitive skill development which is age appropriate by providing a visual framework for the language dependent information, by repetition of important new vocabulary

and difficult names, by use of a multi-sensory approach to teaching-learning, and by the inclusion of the child in a peer group learning experience.

The Textbook

One of the most problematical areas of concern to classroom teachers is the use of a textbook with second language learners who have low reading levels. There are many discrepancies between the oral language learned by children in ESL class and the language of textbooks. The differences are greater than that of vocabulary alone. They include differences in word order, sentence length, voice, tense, metaphorical usage, and the placement and use of clauses. Because of these differences, teachers must either simplify the text for second language students or provide ways for them to use the text in a different way from the English-speaking students in the class.

For poor language users and readers, I would suggest that teachers help students to use the textbook in a different way. For example, the major paragraph headings in a textbook chapter on the life of Ben Franklin can be changed into questions by the language learning student. "Franklin studies printing" becomes "What did Franklin study?" and "Franklin travels in Europe" becomes "Where did Franklin travel?" In addition to helping students with the skill of question formation, this task enables the student to compile a list of chronologically organized questions which form a cognitive set prior to the actual reading experience. If paired with an English-speaking child, the language learning student can ask the questions and the English-speaking child can answer them. These questions and answers are then recorded in the child's notebook.

Textbook pictures can be explicated in a similar fashion. Set a performance objective for a small group or dyad such as: "Answer the following questions about the picture on page 114: Who, what, when, where, why, and how? Use complete sentences." The answered questions are checked for correctness by the teacher. These sentences can then be used by the language learning student to write a summarizing paragraph about the picture. Since pictures ensure much of the meaning that is missing from textbook language, they are useful teaching aids for the content area teacher of a multi-lingual group.

In one of the fourth grade social studies textbooks used in my school, the life of Ben Franklin is illustrated by five or six colorful pictures. Each of the pictures can be explained as described above until the student has acquired several paragraphs concerning the major events in Franklin's life. These paragraphs can be copied into a special book about Ben Franklin; a map can be included pointing out the city and state where he lived as well as a chart containing the important information about his life such as: birth, death, occupation, nationality, etc. Last, the student can make an attractive book cover. These books can be hung on the bulletin board or become a part of the classroom reference collection.

Textbook maps provide a wealth of easily comprehended information for language learning students. They help these students learn map skills as well as vocabulary and sentence structure. The social studies unit on the Civil War in my fourth grade text includes a map of the North and South at the time. Students can use this map to categorize all the proper names printed on the map into the following categories: cities, states, battles, forts, rivers, and lakes. This is a good group activity for both English and non-English speaking students. After the

categories are complete, the resulting chart can be used by language learning students to write sentences such as: Savannah is a city; Georgia is a state; Yorktown was a battle; Fort Dearborn was a fort; The Ohio is a river; Lake Erie is a lake. Note the linguistic information necessary to complete this task correctly. Students must be aware of verb tenses, capitalization rules, and the use of definite and indefinite articles.

These language mechanics rules can be further reinforced by asking students to use the textbook index to look up new vocabulary, copy the page numbers, and then find the new word used in a sentence. The student must copy the sentence exactly without any errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. In this way, students can learn index skills that will be valuable to them later on in school.

Textbook diagrams in both social studies and science texts enable students to practice writing English sentences while illustrating the meaning of the sentence. In my district's fourth grade social studies text, a map of the southern United States is illustrated with major events in the life of Daniel Boone. These pictures are labeled with captions such as: Captured by the Indians, Hunted wild game, etc. Language learning students can use this diagram to write sentences such as: Daniel Boone was captured by the Indians in Kentucky, and Daniel Boone hunted wild game in Tennessee. Science texts also contain many labeled diagrams of science experiments that can be used to teach language as well as the vocabulary of the science class.

The most common use of the text in content area classrooms is the traditional instruction to read a section and answer the comprehension questions at the end. I would suggest that this task be modified somewhat for low level readers by requiring that two children or a small group of children answer the questions collectively. Only one paper need be returned to the teacher with each child's name on it. At least, with a group approach, the language learning child has the opportunity to see and hear the questions discussed as well as to become actively involved in the learning activity.

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